

for your own growth. Herein lies the greatness of the Gohonzon's power." Nodding, she said, "Now I understand, completely."

It is in a muddy swamp that beautiful lotus flowers blossom. Suppose you are one of those flowers. At first you may find the mud repulsive, but on second thought, you can understand that because of that mud you were able to grow and blossom. Then you will realize that you should not resent the mud. Likewise, if you regard all your circumstances, no matter how adverse, as so many good influences and persist with pure and strong faith, you will never fail to find a way out of your troubles. Be firmly convinced of this and strive even more to deepen your faith.

Body and Shadow

AT the various places I visit to give individual guidance, I meet many people who are suffering from illness. I myself do not possess any occult healing powers. What I give is not medical advice but guidance in faith so that they can come to understand the causes of their illnesses and thereby conquer them.

Illness is the effect of some cause, so first I have them consider what that cause may be. The Gosho says, "Buddhism is the body and the world, the shadow. When the body is crooked, so is the shadow."* There

**Gosho Zenshū*, p. 992.

may well be something in their practice of faith which requires correction or improvement. I help them understand what that something is, apologize to the Gohonzon and resolve to change their attitude in faith. Some of them find that they bear grudges against other members. Some become aware that their attitude in faith has been one of complaint, always saying "but this" or "but that." Others realize that they have scarcely been chanting daimoku. Still others discover that they have blamed someone or something else for their illness when the cause actually existed within themselves. The key to good guidance lies in letting people reflect on their attitude in faith and make a new determination.

After receiving guidance, you realize what has been amiss and resolve to rectify it. You probably say, "I will be most careful from now on. I will do my best." But what are you going to do about all the things you have done wrong so far? It is important that you sincerely apologize to the Gohonzon for having been unaware of your errors. Only through such apology and a firm determination toward the future can your various wishes be fulfilled.

Aftercare Vital

CERTAINLY no parents would feel completely satisfied and reassured just because they had their sick child treated by an eminent doctor at a reputable hospital. If they did, they could not truly be said to love their child.

No matter how famous their doctor may be, they will naturally still worry about their child and take care of him as best they can. Is the child getting better? Should they feed him more nutritious food? Is he really on the road to recovery? And so on. If his condition remains the same, they will take him to the hospital again.

The same holds true with guidance in faith. Some leaders feel everything is fine because their members have already received guidance from such and such senior leaders. This is not necessarily so. Leaders closest to the members should always be attentive as to whether those members have accurately grasped the guidance they received from their senior leaders or whether they have reinterpreted it to suit their own convenience. Suppose a sick person brings home several kinds of medicine. His family will see to it that he uses them correctly and does not take an overdose. Likewise, those leaders closest to the members must carefully look after those who have received guidance from senior leaders. This is in part what it means to "treasure each and every member."

For a leader, it is important both to have his members receive guidance and also to receive it himself. Furthermore, when his members do receive guidance, it is important to observe carefully whether they are truly "changing poison into medicine," consider their troubles as if they were his own and look out for them until they have solved their problems.

Thus it often requires more than one leader for guidance to be truly effective. The best results occur when there is good coordination and communication between

the leader who helps his member receive guidance and the leader who gives guidance to that member. When the member has solved his problem, it means that he has obtained a benefit from the Gohonzon. His leaders should encourage him to relate this experience at discussion meetings and talk about it to other people, both members and non-members. In this way he is repaying his debt of gratitude to the Gohonzon. The deeper his gratitude to the Gohonzon, the more benefits he will receive, and the more experiences he will have to share. Those who hear his experiences will be awakened or reawakened to the greatness of faith. Thus the circle of good fortune will go on expanding.

You should not just simply rejoice that you have recovered from illness or overcome a particular problem. You must remember to show your gratitude to the Gohonzon. In this way you will feel still greater joy, and accumulate even more good fortune.

The Best Influence

YOU may think there are innumerable points to bear in mind when giving individual guidance, but actually there are not so many. The essential thing is that the person giving guidance fully understands the purpose of such guidance. The Japanese equivalent of "guidance" is *shidō*, *shi* meaning "to point to" and *dō* meaning "to guide." What do you point to and to where do you guide someone? Naturally you point to the purpose of

faith and guide him to the Gohonzon, the basis of our faith.

I have met with many members who, faced with various problems and troubles, were plunged into the depths of agony. One thing such people have in common is that they all forget about the limitless power of the Gohonzon at the most crucial moment. They become so overwhelmed by events taking place around them that their faith in the Gohonzon diminishes. The first and most important point you should remember in giving individual guidance is to make them realize this fact. In other words, you should tell them not to be swayed by external phenomena but to return to the Gohonzon, the basis of their faith.

A human life is easily influenced. This vulnerability cannot be corrected simply by mental discipline. When you read a tragedy, tears fill your eyes. When you read a hilarious story, you burst into laughter in spite of yourself. Thus human life, this mysterious entity, manifests various conditions in response to external influences. A postcard is nothing but a piece of paper. However, if it carries a threat, the recipient trembles with fear. On the other hand, if it is full of affectionate phrases, he leaps for joy. Therefore, the important thing in life is to encounter good influences. If so, what better influence is there than the Gohonzon, the source of the fundamental power to solve any kind of problem?

For what purpose is a human being born in this world? In the final analysis, he is born to become happy and to fulfill his mission. Tree leaves emerge in spring, proliferate in summer and fall to the earth in autumn.

That is their normal pattern of life. However, some leaves are eaten by worms, while others are not. Some leaves are blown away by the wind; others remain on the branches. Similarly, while all people strive in their own way to become happy, some of them fall ill, and others don't. There are those who meet disasters and those who remain safe and sound. Whether one likes it or not, there are various differences among human beings. People often attribute such differences to either good or bad luck. Buddhism does not. According to Buddhism, such disparities result from karma created in previous existences. People must suffer in this life because of the causes they formed in the past.

Everyone wants to be happy. When, contrary to one's expectations, he meets failure or suffering, he may tend to blame it on others or on society. True, other people or society may be responsible as external causes, but no problem can be completely solved unless one seeks out the fundamental cause. Those who embrace the Gohonzon are no exception. It is vital to let members understand that the causes of everything they experience lie within them. However, just to realize this is not enough. They must endeavor to change poison into medicine. By earnestly praying to the Gohonzon in order to change their destiny for the better, they can transform their bad karma into the cause for happiness. That is why our Buddhism is called the Mystic Law. You must bear this in mind when giving individual guidance.

Compassionate Prayer

HOW should you deal with those members who have ceased practicing? The only way is to continue giving patient guidance, appropriate to each situation. People will not stand up and act merely because of your words. Were words enough, you would only have to record a senior leader's guidance on tape and let inactive members listen to it. Then there would be no need for so many leaders. This, of course, would never work. Why not? Because guidance is not just words but a totality of the personality, sincerity, and enthusiasm of the person giving the guidance, as well as the content of what he says. All of these express one's compassion. Continue to give guidance patiently until your compassion shakes the other person's life at its foundation.

If you fail the first time, try again. If you still do not succeed, visit the member a third time, a fourth time and so on, with an appropriate interval in between. He will be impressed not so much by the frequency of your visits or the content of your talk as by the compassion and enthusiasm with which you try to awaken him. The benefits you receive do not depend on whether or not the other person resumes his practice. Paying him frequent visits and talking to him in earnest is in itself carrying out the Buddha's work.

We are told that we should give guidance through our own example of human revolution. This is as it should be, to be sure, but in reality we ourselves are

still in the process of our own human revolution. If we had to perfect ourselves first before we could give guidance, we might have to wait indefinitely. Think of this in terms of a parent-child relationship. If parents had to set a perfect example for their children, almost no one would be qualified. Faith, however, can compensate for this lack of qualification. Your fervent and compassionate prayer that your children will earnestly practice Buddhism will convey itself to their hearts. The same principle applies to individual guidance. Your compassion for the other person and your prayer that he will resume his practice will strike a responsive chord in his heart and activate his Buddha nature.

If you think you are having a hard time because of this or that member, you are viewing things superficially. If you are a district chief, then all the troubles facing your district members are food for your own growth. Only when you grapple squarely with all these problems can you change your own destiny for the better by creating good causes and accumulating good fortune. With this conviction, continue to give guidance so that as many of your members as possible will be awakened to the greatness of faith.

Harmonizing Role

A VICE chief at any level of our organization might be compared to a ball bearing in an automobile. In an automobile, steel balls are placed where the wheel joins

the axle. Fixed neither to the axle nor to the wheel, they enable the wheel to revolve smoothly and efficiently. What if an automobile lacked ball bearings? The wheels would turn around, to be sure, but the car would not be able to achieve much speed. A vice chief, like a ball bearing, works to bring harmony to the organization.

Let's take the family as an example. Suppose the child has failed to do his homework, is naughty or disobedient. One parent scolds him. In this case, the other parent often acts in one of the following three ways: 1) joins in reprimanding the child; 2) blames his or her spouse for scolding the child too severely and provokes a quarrel; or 3) trapped between spouse and child, is at a loss as to what to do.

The question is whether or not this person correctly grasps the nature of the situation. This is where accurate cognition and evaluation become important. The child's negligence of his homework or his disobedience is a matter which concerns the child. Whether one parent scolds him mildly or harshly is a matter which concerns that parent. The other parent must clearly distinguish between these two matters. If he or she fails to do this and considers the two as being one, there is no choice but to fall into one of the three patterns of behavior described above. Instead it would be good to advise the child, saying, "Perhaps it was wrong to scold you so harshly, but that's his (or her) problem. It doesn't mean you are in the right. I'll speak to him (or her) about not being so harsh, but for your part, you must correct your behavior." A parent who can give such

advice is an excellent "bearing."

The same holds true with our organization. The vice chief has a vital part to play—that of creating and maintaining harmony between the chief and the members. For this reason, I hope that vice chiefs will always try to be superb co-players who act with the same awareness and responsibility as their chiefs and who endeavor to lead the organization wisely based on an overall viewpoint.

Moreover, if you support the chief as a good "bearing," you will in turn be well supported should you ever hold that position. This is the natural working of cause and effect.

Support Each Other

IN order to maintain harmony within the organization, it is first of all important to support the person in a position of responsibility. To support him, however, does not mean always to be with him and do everything as he says.

To support the chief also means to support each and every member. As I said earlier, family harmony cannot be maintained if both parents join in berating their child, if one sides with the child against the other parent, or if one is trapped in between and doesn't know what to do. To apply this to our organization, you must neither join your chief in reprimanding the members, nor take their side in criticizing him.

Let's assume that you overhear one of your members criticizing your chapter chief. It will never do to reproach him, saying, "If you criticize a leader, you'll receive a negative effect." It is even worse if you agree with him and say, "I understand your resentment, because I feel exactly the same way. He's simply impossible to get along with." Nor is there any value in just worrying, trapped in between.

In this case, you can say to your member, "Our chapter chief may scold us too severely. He may not have much tolerance sometimes. That is his problem. But if you bear a grudge against him on account of it, that's your problem. Under no circumstances whatsoever should you entertain bad feelings against him or, for that matter, against any believer." Then redirect him to the task at hand and encourage him to tackle it. In carrying out our activities, it is as important to maintain harmony within the organization as it is to let each and every member give full play to his capability. Family members each have their respective parts to play in the family. Likewise, each member has a role of his own to perform within the organization. It is important to understand and complement each other's role.

Never-retreating Faith

A STUDENT who is not permitted to advance to the next grade is said to have failed. A believer who does not progress in faith is called a backslider. The Gosho

says, "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken even a bit, demons will take advantage."* If a member has been practicing for years but still remains at the same level of faith as when he started, he is, in a sense, going backward. If an infant sings a nursery rhyme, people will applaud him, saying, "Well done! How smart you are!" However, if he cannot do anything but sing that same nursery rhyme even after becoming an adult, people will consider him retarded and begin to worry about him. What deserves praise in infancy does not necessarily receive the same evaluation in adulthood. He may protest, saying, "You used to praise me for singing this song before. Then why do you disapprove of it now?" He is oblivious to the fact that as far as his musicality is concerned, he himself has not grown a bit.

The same holds true with faith. The longer a person's practice, the deeper his faith and the higher his state of life should be. The second president, Josei Toda, used to say, "Not advancing is the same as retreating." This is strict guidance, but a point we should always bear in mind. I hope all of you will strive to be true followers of the Mystic Law who maintain pure faith and a strong seeking spirit and who always rigorously challenge themselves.

**Major Writings*, vol. I, pp. 241-42.

The Only Reliable Support

ONCE a housewife came to me to seek advice. She complained that her husband was totally undependable. He had closed the *sushi* shop which he had run for many years. Since then, he had taken job after job, failing in each one.

This is in essence what I told her:

Men are not born to be leaned upon by women. Why are you trying to depend on your husband, who you just told me is totally undependable? Sometimes we cannot even rely upon ourselves; then how can we expect to rely upon others? Your husband would be enraged to hear this, but he is not someone to depend on.

Let's assume, for argument's sake, that your husband were a dependable person. What would happen if he fell ill or failed in his business? Worse still, what if he should die prematurely? You would have no one to rely on. The one and only reliable support in life is the Gohonzon. A husband is not someone to lean on but someone to relate to with love. So are children. You raise them because you love them and not because of any ulterior motive.

Some people, when they grow old, try to depend on their children. When their expectation is betrayed, they complain, "After all the hardships we went through to bring them up, they refuse to take care of us." They seem to have raised their children not because of love,

but out of self-interest—as a sort of old-age insurance. I do not think this is the correct attitude parents should take.

It is important that you chant to the Gohonzon that your husband will become an invaluable asset to the movement for *kōsen-rufu* and that your children will grow up to be fine adults. You should continue to do so until your prayers are answered. Those prayers will convey themselves to your husband and children, enrich their hearts and cause them to protect you. This is the true meaning of love.

The same principle applies to personal relationships within the organization of the Soka Gakkai. The chapter women's chief should not try to depend on the chapter chief. When the leaders and members of various divisions work together with the Gohonzon at the center of their activities, unity and harmony will arise naturally within their chapter. A man who lords it over everyone at home makes his family miserable and antagonistic to him. His wife and children will regard him with respect and love only when he shows concern for them and fulfills his responsibilities toward them, praying that all of them will be able to contribute to the movement for *kōsen-rufu*. The same holds true with a leader of our organization.

Correct Bad Attitude

A LEADER giving individual guidance should not only address the immediate problem but devote heart and soul to helping that person establish a correct attitude in faith. Where two parties are concerned, he should be careful not to listen to only one of them and be swayed by what that person has to say. If you give guidance in favor of one party, you will in all probability incur the resentment of the other. That will make the problem even more complicated.

We encounter various problems in the course of our human revolution. However, a seed cannot sprout unless it is covered with dirt. Here the seed represents the internal cause and dirt is the external cause. Each of us has the seed of Buddhahood implanted within and, like the seed of a plant, it requires "dirt" in order to sprout. In Buddhism, this "dirt" is called *zenchishiki*, a good influence. It may take the form of disease, troubles with one's children and, in some cases, financial problems.

Here I'd like to talk about money troubles. A rich person worries about the money he lends; a poor person worries about the money he borrows. The important thing is whether or not these people can use their respective problems as a springboard for their human revolution. When money troubles occur between members, you must not approach such problems merely from the standpoint of who is to blame, the lender or the borrower. Instead you should give them proper guidance

in faith so that they can reflect upon their attitude. Say to the lender, "Because of your lack of confidence, you could not reject this person's request. So you lent him money. In Buddhism, that is called 'small mercy'—something which appears to be mercy but in actuality is not mercy at all." Remind the borrower, "You must learn to depend on the Gohonzon and not on someone else's wallet."

Moreover, from your own standpoint, you should regard this problem among your members as an opportunity to change some aspect of your own bad karma. Staying away from the organization will not make it go away. A similar problem would then eventually appear in some other aspect of your life. Rather you must earnestly chant daimoku in order to change "poison" into "medicine." Do not reproach the members, but give them considerate guidance in faith and then encourage them so that they will be able to develop their faith. Then you too can greatly develop and gain good fortune.

Sometimes money trouble may assume such serious proportions that it becomes necessary to remove the member concerned from his position. Even in such cases, you must bear in mind that this is in no way a punitive measure. Tell the individual concerned that this step is being taken in order to prevent disturbance within the organization, and thereby make it easier for him to stand up again. Give him compassionate guidance and encouragement so that he can reflect upon his faith, chant daimoku earnestly and eventually be able to resume his position.

Through many experiences, both those who give guidance and those who receive it will be able to strengthen their faith and make further growth.

Avoid Slander

A PASSAGE in the *Kambotsu* (28th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra says that anyone who proclaims the faults and errors of those who believe in the Lotus Sutra, "whether what he speaks is true or false," will suffer loss. I heard this passage more than thirty years ago, soon after I took faith. After some time, however, I became conceited and argumentative, as many people do when their practice lapses into force of habit. I began to question the above-quoted passage. It is wrong, I agreed, to say that other believers did evil when in reality they did not. But if in fact they did, then why shouldn't we say so? The passage states, "whether true or false." That's absurd, I thought. Perhaps it was intended to protect believers of the Lotus Sutra, but isn't that showing prejudice?

I took my question to the first president of the Soka Gakkai, Mr. Makiguchi. Quoting from the *Gosho*, he said, "It all comes down to whether or not you have compassion. If you point out another member's errors out of a genuine desire to help him correct them, you are doing good. On the other hand, if you do so only to criticize or disparage him, then even if what you say is true, you are doing wrong." I was fully convinced.

There are two kinds of anger: constructive and destructive. If you scold your child because you want him to grow up to be a good person, that is constructive anger. On the other hand, if you get petulant and emotional and bawl him out because he refuses to obey you, that is destructive anger. The same holds true with the relationships between Soka Gakkai members. Under no circumstance must we ridicule or bear grudges against those who embrace the Gohonzon. In the final analysis, the question is what kind of feeling lies in the depths of our hearts. Let's advance together in perfect harmony, respecting one another.

Trouble Can Nourish Growth

(To a leader who left the organization because of conflicts with other leaders)

THE only place that a lotus can bloom and grow thick, healthy roots is in the mud and slime of a lotus pond. If the lotus started to hate its dirty pond and snuck away to some school swimming pool, how could it ever bloom? What would happen to its roots? People may complain of all kinds of troubles in life, but it's only because of such difficulties that you can attain your human revolution. This is the principle of changing poison into medicine. If you clean the mud out of the pond and pave it with concrete, what'll happen to the lotus? It'll never bloom. The pond represents our problem-filled world, the lotus is you and the mud is your

problems—the indispensable nourishment for your human revolution, your own growth. No matter how muddy or dirty its pond is, the lotus can still bloom beautifully.

Therefore, in order to attain your human revolution, you have to stay in the pond and struggle to grow right in that mud. In other words, without all kinds of difficulties and problems in life, you can't really grow as a human being. The organization may do something you don't agree with, but that doesn't mean you have to get out. Your effort to overcome those difficulties makes you grow. But whatever you do to overcome them should be based on sincere daimoku to the Gohonzon. Otherwise, you will neither change your karma nor achieve any lasting success. In order to change your karma you have to bring forth strong vitality and establish an unshakable self amid this troubled, mundane world. With consistent efforts you can bring the beautiful flower of your human revolution to bloom.

You might still feel that your particular pond is so deep and dirty that you'll never be able to reach the surface. Maybe the seed of your human revolution is buried deeper than those of other people. However, the deeper and the dirtier the pond, the larger and the more beautiful the lotus flower when it blooms. Don't ever run away again. Instead, chant lots of daimoku to the Gohonzon. Apologize to the Gohonzon for having tried to escape from the pond, and pledge to become an individual who can really contribute to *kōsen-rufu*. Always remember the principle of the lotus flower.

Merciful Consideration

(To a member who was born sickly)

FIRST of all, you must consider why you were born into this world with a weak constitution. The Gosho, quoting from the *Shinjikan Sutra*, states, "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present."* In light of the Buddhist law of causality which permeates the three existences of past, present and future, your infirmity is a manifestation of the bad karma you accumulated in your past existences.

Your trouble will not be fundamentally solved unless and until you change that karma. For instance, take a wooden pail that leaks. You patch it and the leaking stops for the time being. However, unless you put new hoops on the pail, it will quickly decay and fall apart. As the Gosho states, "If you try to treat someone's illness without knowing what the cause of the illness is, you will only make the person sicker than before."†

Each of us has the seed of Buddhahood within his life. Now, no seed, no matter how well-bred, will sprout unless it is covered with earth. There must likewise be "earth"—in other words, a good influence—in order for our seed of Buddhahood to sprout. "Earth" in your case is your delicate constitution. It is because of that problem that you seek Buddhism. It is your illness which

**Gosho Zenshū*, p. 231.

†*Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 193.

prompts you to chant daimoku. For you, your bad health works as what Buddhism calls a *zenchishiki*.

Changing one's karma for the better does not simply mean that a sick person is cured of his illness. It is not something like rubbing out a misspelled word with an eraser. You must show the actual proof of "poison" changed into "medicine." You must irrefutably prove to the world that you have attained a higher state of life than before.

The Gosho states, "Your husband's disease may well be the merciful consideration of the Buddha, for the *Jōmyō* and the Nirvana sutras expound that those who are ill can attain Buddhahood. Sickness awakens a seeking spirit."* Use your illness as an impetus to strengthen your faith and arouse your passion to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. Your sickness is "the Buddha's merciful consideration," because it is working to awaken you to the importance of reflecting upon your attitude in faith. The question is whether or not you will be able to take it as an "alarm clock" for your faith and correct anything about your practice which needs correcting.

Please devote yourself to gongyo, chanting and *shakubuku* so you will be able to manifest the Buddhahood which exists within you. Show to the world the actual proof of "poison" changed into "medicine" by bringing about a marvelous change in your karma.

**Gosho Zenshū*, p. 1480.

Purpose of Faith

THE purpose of faith is to become happy. Faith enables us to change every problem we face into a springboard for our growth, that is, to change poison into medicine, so that later we can say proudly, "Because of that trouble, we were able to attain our present happiness."

Some people say they have nothing to worry about. Actually they do; they are just not aware of it. There is no one in the world who is completely free from care. You ask a drunkard if there is anything that troubles him. He replies, "Not a thing." He is the happiest man on earth, but what about his wife and children?

Human life is always attended by various desires.

"I want my son to be a better child, a pupil who is strong in all subjects."

"I hope my husband will get a raise."

"My wife is so irascible. I want her to be kinder to me."

People are elated when their wishes come true. On the other hand, if their desires are not easily fulfilled, they begin to worry—about their children, spouses, money, and so on. Each of these worries is the result of a past cause manifesting itself in the present. Buddhism enables us to solve our problems by rectifying their fundamental causes. It gives us the power to have our wishes answered.

Some members quickly understand the guidance they receive. Others, even if they repeatedly hear the same

guidance, find it hard to comprehend. I'll explain where this difference originates. Some people try to solve their problems without resort to daimoku, and go to a leader to seek guidance only after they have been totally defeated in their attempt. In such cases, they often view getting guidance as just another technique or method for solving their problems. Since they grope for means other than the strategy of the Lotus Sutra, they do not easily understand what the leader tells them. On the other hand, those who have been earnestly chanting daimoku, relying on the Gohonzon in order to overcome their difficulties, readily grasp the guidance they are given. As you can see, the difference depends on whether you have chanted sufficient daimoku.

A schoolteacher delivers a lecture to his students, and then gives them a test. Some of them may score as high as ninety points, while others get only thirty. Now the teacher lectured to all of the students on the same subject for the same length of time. We can only conclude, then, that the responsibility for the differing examination results rests not with the speaker but with his listeners.

If anyone knows how to solve problems of karma without chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon, I would just as soon go to see him and receive guidance. In reality, however, I have never seen or heard of anyone who obtained such benefits without chanting daimoku.

In light of the causal law of life, it is because of bad karma that one is troubled by his children, parents, spouse, and so on.

At discussion meetings, a woman will often ask me

how to deal with her troublesome child. I give her guidance in great detail, and she finally understands. Another woman immediately raises her hand and says she is also worried about her children. "I've just given that other lady advice on that point," I remind her. "The guidance holds true for you as well." "She has only one child," retorts the woman, offended. "I have three."

The problems these two women face may slightly differ from each other, but they fall in the same area and therefore the same principle applies to both. I want all of you to become good listeners so you will be able to apply the guidance you hear to varying situations.

Watch Warning Signs

SOME of you may think in frustration, "Members all over the world are receiving wonderful benefits from the Gohonzon. I read amazing experiences in the Soka Gakkai publications. Then why isn't my prayer answered?" Don't worry. If you rectify your attitude, benefits will begin to come your way.

Suppose you have an accident and escape with only a slight injury. You may say, rejoicing, "Because I practice Buddhism, I was able to avoid a disaster," and be contented with that fact. This is too easygoing an attitude in faith. Of course, it is only natural and proper to feel gratitude to the Gohonzon that you were protected. But there are times when you must take such a

mishap, though minor, as a warning from the Gohonzon to the effect that "You have the destiny to encounter accidents of this kind, so be careful. Strengthen your faith even more so you can change poison into medicine." A slight misfortune is often a precursor of a catastrophe. Take the Gohonzon's warning seriously, and reawaken your faith.

Imagine a child huddling in bed in the morning. His mother tells him several times to get up, but he still will not rise. Finally, she explodes. The child, still lying in bed, asks himself, "Why am I being scolded so harshly? Is it punishment, or is it because of my bad karma?" I think those questions can wait until after he gets up. It is also pointless for him to try somehow to evade his mother's scolding. All he has to do is get out of bed.

While not every illness or accident necessarily means that something is wrong with your faith, it is wise to use such occasions to reexamine your practice, improve or correct it where necessary, and further strengthen your faith.

Some time ago a woman came to see me for guidance about her husband's sickness. She said that when her husband had a chest X-ray taken, it showed a shadow indicating some cause for concern. He did not practice sincerely at the time, but because of this warning he started practicing more seriously. He reflected on and changed his attitude toward practice. Some time later when he again had a chest X-ray taken, there was no shadow at all, much to the doctor's surprise. I gave her guidance when she first came to me to

the effect that he should apologize to the Gohonzon for his lack of sincerity and that he should pledge to the Gohonzon to do his best to grow and contribute to *kōsen-rufu*.

The shadow in the X-ray was like an alarm clock which warns you when you are not sincere in faith. But once you are awakened, it ceases to ring and its existence becomes unnecessary. Nichiren Daishonin says in the Goshō that illness can be an opportunity to grow in faith. He states, "Your husband's disease may well be the merciful consideration of the Buddha. . ."^{*} A mishap can be a warning which says, "There is something you need to understand. Strengthen your faith so you can find out what it is." At that time it is important for you to correct your attitude wherever necessary and resolve anew to develop your faith. So long as you keep your "eyes of faith" wide open, you will eventually be able to solve your problem, changing it into an impetus for your growth.

The fact that you have faith is no reason to be careless or take things for granted. If you have been assuming this easygoing attitude, then change it. Be strict with yourself, live your entire life wisely, and receive the great benefit of lessening your karmic retribution. Then, one day, you will be able to look back and say with gratitude, "That was truly an excruciating experience, but it is precisely because of that hardship that I became what I am today."

^{*}Goshō Zenshū, p. 1480.

Everything Is Significant to Faith

WHEN you suffer a setback or mishap, regard it as a warning from the Gohonzon to reflect on your attitude toward faith. Otherwise, you may start complaining and soon get into bigger trouble. You might even wind up doubting your faith.

But if you take it as a strict warning from the Gohonzon, you can reflect on your attitude toward faith and thank the Gohonzon for the fact that the accident wasn't serious. Then you can apologize to the Gohonzon for any past insincerity and pledge to strengthen your determination for *kōsen-rufu*. This is how to avert more serious accidents that might happen in the future. When something bad happens to you, no matter how trifling it may be, if you think of it as significant to your faith, you can make it a cause for happiness. On the contrary, even though something serious happens to you, if you fail to think it significant to your faith, it will become a cause for unhappiness.

Therefore, check your attitude toward faith so that you can consider even a small incident as something valuable and significant. That's how you can change poison into medicine.

Visible benefits are not as great as invisible benefits. In Buddhism the intangible benefits are truly great. I'm not denying the value of conspicuous benefits, but it's important to understand this point. If you fail to do so, you may think you will always receive conspicuous ben-

efits, and if you don't, you may lose confidence in faith.

We can understand the concept of conspicuous and inconspicuous benefit in terms of absolute and relative happiness. To improve one's life materially and physically is to attain relative happiness. But relative happiness, no matter how great, has nothing to do with absolute happiness. That's why we are so often told not to be swayed by superficial things in our practice of true Buddhism. When you become rich, you might lose sight of that essential something in your faith and forget about your absolute happiness. No matter what happens to you, you should continue to chant to the Gohonzon. When you feel happy, you should thank the Gohonzon for your happiness. When you feel sad, you should pray to the Gohonzon so that you can replace the sadness with joy. In any event, it is the Gohonzon alone that you can depend on.

Reflect upon Attitude

THE other day I heard of the experience of a women's division member whose son had run away from home more than ten years ago. This had been her greatest anxiety. Two years ago the son returned to the same prefecture in which his mother lived, but he would not come to her house. What came instead were dunning notes from the loan sharks to whom he was indebted. Day in and day out she was filled with complaint and hatred for her son, constantly blaming him and thinking,

"Because of that child I have to go through all this suffering."

One day she attended a guidance meeting. Hearing a leader talk, she realized that it was she herself who had the destiny to suffer on account of her child. There and then she profoundly regretted having borne a grudge against her son. The Goshō states, "Even a small offense will destine one to the evil paths if one does not repent of it. But even a great slander can be eradicated if one repents of it."^{*} Why did she have to suffer on account of her child? It was because of the negative causes she herself must have made in the past. Nevertheless she had placed the entire blame on her son. True, he might have been the immediate cause of her hardship, but the fundamental cause lay in her own karma and she had thus far been powerless to change it. All this she now completely understood.

From that day, she changed her entire attitude in faith. She chanted and chanted, apologizing to the Gohonzon for the slanders she must have committed in her past existence and for the grudge she had harbored against her child. Soon her son, after an absence of more than a decade, returned to live with her again. What's more, he took faith in Nichiren Shoshu. At a meeting of his district he publicly apologized and said, "I am truly sorry for all the trouble I've caused over these many years." Tears filled his eyes as he pledged to strive and develop himself.

A child will change for the better when his parent

^{*}Goshō Zenshū, p. 930.

corrects his or her attitude in faith. Take this deeply to heart, and you'll be able to change your bad karma. As long as you blame the other person, thinking, "If it weren't for him, I could be happy," then he never will change. Rather, gaze into your own life and destiny, and change your attitude first. Then, much to your surprise, a change will occur in the other person according to the principle of the inseparability of life and its environment.

"Lessening One's Karmic Retribution"

WE are told that if we pray to the Gohonzon, all offenses are eradicated. Some members take this to mean that mere worship of the Gohonzon will make all the bad causes they committed in their past existences vanish immediately. Were that true, then one could change his karma for the better the moment he took faith in Nichiren Shoshu. This is impossible, for, as the Goshō says, "Buddhism is reason."^{*}

Let's assume that a thief is chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon, with the loot still in his pocket. Can he eradicate his crime? No way. He must first return the stolen goods to their owner and make reparation for the trouble he caused. In our case, by apologizing to the Gohonzon for our past slander and devoting ourselves to activities, we will be able to experience our negative

^{*}Ibid., p. 1169.

effects much more lightly. We will also be able to eradicate in this lifetime bad effects that might otherwise trouble us over many existences. This is the principle of "lessening one's karmic retribution." Remember that we are changing our destiny through our daily practice of gongyo and *shakubuku*.

In this connection, the Gosho states, "Bodhisattva Fukyō was not abused and vilified, stoned and beaten with staves without reason. He had probably slandered the True Law in the past. The phrase 'after expiating his sins' indicates that because Bodhisattva Fukyō met persecution, he could eradicate his sins from previous lifetimes."^{*}

You suffer in this life because of past karma. You might claim that you didn't create any bad karma or ever slander the Lotus Sutra. But actually, none of you can remember what you did in your past lives. The only way to know your past is to look at your present life. Your present life is totally the result of your past. When you suffer you should consider that it may come from the bad karma you created by acting against the True Law in the past. Then you must do the opposite—praise the Law and teach it to others by doing *shakubuku*. In order to remove your bad karma completely, you have to practice hard. Of course, one person's karma may be heavier than another's. But with the power of the Gohonzon anybody can overcome his karmic effects and change his destiny.

Sincerely chant to the Gohonzon with deep apology

**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 17.

for any past slander you may have committed and pledge to devote yourself to the great cause of *kōsen-rufu* by sharing faith in the Gohonzon with others. This is the way to remove your bad karma. Prayer and practice are just like the two wheels of a cart. If either is missing, the cart won't go forward an inch. Even if you're doing activities without knowing why, you will still achieve your own human revolution. In other words, achieving human revolution means you are changing your bad karma. With this understanding, change each of your problems into a good influence, grapple squarely with your destiny, and advance valiantly and cheerfully along the path of your human revolution.

Curing Illness

THE second president, Josei Toda, used to say, "There can be no guidance aimed specifically at curing sickness itself." By this he was succinctly pointing out the error we leaders are apt to commit. To cure an illness is the physician's role. Ours is to give guidance in faith. Some leaders engross themselves in discussing the treatment of disease, with little effort at providing advice from the standpoint of faith. This gives no fundamental solution to the member who came to seek guidance. This is true not only of illness but other specific problems as well.

The Gosho states, "If you try to treat someone's illness without knowing what the cause of the illness is,

you will only make the person sicker than before.* If you fail to discern the fundamental cause of the member's problem and give him only superficial advice, then, far from enabling him to solve his trouble, you will cause him more unhappiness than before.

There are numerous illnesses. Some can be cured by the exercise of moderation on the patient's part, and others by medical treatment. It is absurd to rely solely on faith and refuse to consult a doctor. It is equally foolish to depend only on physicians and not recognize the necessity of changing one's karma. When one's sickness is caused by the devilish workings of his own nature or by his karma, it is a problem originating in the depths of his life and cannot be cured by medicine. Whether one's sickness is caused by devilish functions or by his karma, he has no alternative but to strengthen his faith enough to overcome the cause and cure the sickness.

Steady Course

IT is natural that even we who have faith should encounter various problems in the course of our lives. With the power of faith, however, we can solve all those troubles. One day we will be able to look back and think, "Because of that problem, I was able to grow, and a new road in life opened up for me." Buddhism

**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 193.

calls this the benefit of "changing poison into medicine."

I once heard a young medical student relate his experience. Before he began practicing Buddhism, his mother had been bedridden with rheumatism. His father was a physician, but he could not cure his wife's disease. On top of it the couple would engage in endless quarrels. How the youth resented the gloomy and depressing atmosphere of his family! This motivated him to take faith in Nichiren Shoshu. Then, one after another, the other members of his family followed suit. As a result, his mother recovered from her illness and his family became a bright and harmonious one.

The family was well-off. Had the father and mother been devoted to each other, and had the mother been healthy, the family would most likely not have taken faith in true Buddhism. It was because his parents fought like cats and dogs, and because his mother was ill, that the youth sought the Gohonzon and established his faith. Now, hearing this, some of you may decide, "Okay, we'll start quarreling with each other from today. That way our children will develop." But this is missing the point.

Everyone has their own worries. I once heard an old woman remark, "I have the worst karma in the world." "How do you know it's the worst?" I asked. "I don't know," she replied. "I never thought about it." I asked her if she knew how deep her neighbor's karma was. She said she didn't. In adversity everyone thinks that he or she is the unhappiest person on earth. However, it is true that the deeper the mud, the larger the lotus flowers

which bloom in it. Similarly, if one decides, "Okay, because this mud is so deep, I'm going to chant more daimoku than other people," then he can change poison into medicine.

I make it a rule to tell people to pray to the Gohonzon before they brood over their problems or complain. Some of you may be worried about your marriage partners not doing gongyo. But, no matter how many times you may complain, it will not make them embrace the Gohonzon. The Gosho teaches that benefits come from chanting daimoku. Nowhere does it say that you can obtain benefits by complaining, even if you do so a million times.

Fundamentally, everyone wants to be happy. The key to attaining happiness lies in whether we can overcome the negative influences of our environment or whether we will be defeated by them. We must build up a strong life force in order to win. Think of the wheat. The harder it is trodden under, the stouter the seedling that grows. This very process assures a rich harvest. The same holds true with human development.

No matter how well-bred a seed may be, as long as it is placed on a table it will not sprout, much less bear fruit. Only when it is buried in earth can it sprout. Each of us has the seed of happiness—in other words, the seed of Buddhahood—within. It is covered with the "earth" of various problems, which motivate us to chant daimoku to the Gohonzon. Then the seed will sprout. Thus the "earth" serves as a good influence.

Some of you may be worried because of your mates, children or parents. But so long as you merely com-

plain about them, you will not be able to solve your problem. Instead, resolve to turn your anxiety into an impetus for changing your karma, into a springboard for attaining enlightenment—in other words, into a good influence. Then muster your power of faith and practice, and chant and chant until you have solved your problem. Only your faith in the Gohonzon can enable you to do this. Without the Gohonzon, it is impossible to transform your problem into a good influence for changing your karma.

The Right Direction

EVERYONE has some problem or other. Problems vary according to one's state of life. You need not ask other people what their troubles are. By knowing the nature of their desires, you can gauge the extent of their happiness or unhappiness.

Every living person has one desire or another, but desires vary in scale. Suppose a man cannot afford his next meal. This is an urgent problem. How he must wish he had money to buy something to eat! The more immediately a problem affects one, the more serious it seems.

The second president, Mr. Toda, used to say, "I want to help all unhappy people through Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I want to prevent another atomic bomb from dropping on Japan." This was his greatest wish, and also the problem which troubled him most.

Which problem is greater in magnitude, Mr. Toda's worry or not being able to get supper? The former is, of course. Considered in this context, the larger one's worry, the greater his state of life. We could even say that one's trouble is the yardstick of his happiness.

Even Buddhas have problems. They want to make people happy, but because some common mortals will not take faith in the true teaching, they are worried. But the fact that they are worried does not mean that they are unhappy. I'm sure some of you used to think only of your own problems but now rack your brains to solve other people's troubles as well. This is proof that you have risen in your state of life and have become happier than before.

We feel happy when our wishes are fulfilled, and troubled if they are not. So the important thing is for us to possess the power to have our wishes realized. Everyone wants to enjoy happiness. So how should we go about achieving it? Parents remind their children, "You must not be lazy. What counts in life is diligence." What they say is correct, but do all diligent people become happy? There are many who work with all their might and end up heavily in debt.

Married people are another case in point. I don't think anyone purposely sought the worst person in the world and married him or her in order to become unhappy. Each of them must have married in the belief that he or she was choosing the best person on earth, and must have made great efforts to establish a happy marriage. Then do all families that strive for happiness attain it? Not exactly. Quite a few people lament, "This

is not what I intended my life to be." Parents do everything they can to help their children grow up to be fine adults, but some of them are betrayed in their expectation.

Diligence is, of course, vital. It is a must for attaining happiness. Imagine a person saying, "I want to make money, but I hate to get up in the morning. And since I get tired easily, I don't want to work hard." He will never become wealthy. However, diligence is not enough. There are invisible factors such as fortune and karma, which faith alone can alter.

When meetings are over, leaders may warn you about traffic accidents. Then can you avoid all accidents so long as you exercise caution? Not necessarily. Suppose you see a car coming from ahead. You ask yourself, "Is the driver drunk? Does he have a license? Is he dozing?" If you become overcautious and keep looking this way and that, that would be even more dangerous. While you are focusing all your attention ahead, another automobile may be approaching from behind.

I go abroad once in a while. Before I leave, my friends always tell me to be careful because my airplane may be hijacked or crash due to some malfunction. But what kind of precaution can I possibly take? If the plane goes down, I'll be forced to go down with it, no matter how desperately I may cling to my seat.

Of course, there are a number of unhappy occurrences which we can prevent so long as we are careful and diligent. Caution and effort, however, have their limits. In the course of life we sometimes come across problems which we cannot avoid even with the utmost caution

and effort. This is precisely why we must pray to the Gohonzon.

Suppose that you were involved in a traffic accident. The immediate cause may have been because it was late at night and you were hurrying home, because it was dark, or because it was raining. But, in the final analysis, it was because you had the karma to meet that accident. It is therefore vital to pray to the Gohonzon. This is what sets us apart from those who do not embrace the Gohonzon. Faith in the Gohonzon enables us to change our karma for the better and develop good fortune. It steers us in the direction of happiness.

Behavior Is Important

PERHAPS you remember the time when anti-Japanese sentiment flared up in Southeast Asia and several Japanese firms were burned by mobs. When I visited that area later, I asked the local members what kind of firms had suffered destruction and what kind had not. I was told that it had had nothing to do with the line of business. At some firms, when the mob had been about to set a fire, the people living in the neighborhood restrained them, saying, "The Japanese working here have never hurt us." Those firms which had always maintained warm relations with the local people and had won their trust had been left unharmed.

This principle applies not only to Japanese firms abroad, but to our own daily lives. In our respective

communities, each of us is regarded as a representative of the Soka Gakkai. So long as we are disliked by our neighbors or are frowned upon by the people in our community for our behavior, it will be impossible to spread Buddhism widely in society.

We must become citizens with good common sense who are liked and trusted by people in our neighborhood, community and worksite. To contribute toward *kōsen-rufu* is not just to win new converts and engage in Gakkai activities. The question is whether or not our existence itself is an asset to *kōsen-rufu*.

Be extremely careful not to "disgrace the Lotus Sutra" through unreasonable words or actions, or through some trifling incident. Become excellent people so that everyone around you will say, "He is truly respectable. Everything about him is refreshing." At the same time, treasure your association with other people, and expand circles of friendship and trust in your community. Be convinced that *kōsen-rufu* lies in your daily actions.

Faith as the Basis

I HAVE seen innumerable members renew their lives and show splendid proof of their human revolution, thanks to the Gohonzon's great power. Some of them, after having dedicated themselves to the cause of true Buddhism, passed away on the road to *kōsen-rufu*, leaving their friends feeling that their death cannot be too

much regretted. However, what pleases me and reassures me more than anything is the fact that their bereaved families have valiantly overcome their sorrow and are now vigorously advancing along the path to happiness.

Let me talk about one such family—two sisters and a brother who lost their parents some twenty years ago. Shortly before their mother breathed her last, she called her three children to her bedside and, by way of a last will, said to them, "No matter what difficulties you may meet in the future, you must never leave the Gohonzon."

All of their relatives opposed the faith. None of them would come to the orphans' aid. The three children had to undergo indescribable hardships, but they strictly abided by their mother's wishes and continued to uphold their faith, always cooperating with one another. Now all three are active in the movement of *kōsen-rufu*. The eldest daughter is a mother of seven¹ children, the second daughter a mother of three, and the son a father of two. Each has a happy and harmonious family. I can envision the smiling face of their deceased mother.

The Goshō states, "Because of the great benefit accruing from the revered Maudgalyayana's belief in the Lotus Sutra, he not only became a Buddha himself but his parents also attained Buddhahood."² This passage refers specifically to Maudgalyayana, but the principle it contains applies to all of us. A child, determined to succeed his parents in the movement for *kōsen-rufu*, exerts himself in faith, practice and study. Then, not

¹Goshō Zenshū, p. 1430.

only will he himself attain Buddhahood but the blessings he obtains will also shower upon his ancestors as well as his descendants. He can lead anyone related to him to happiness.

What gives the greatest joy to a deceased member? It is for his child to carry out his mission for *kōsen-rufu* and to show actual proof that he has become happy. This is the greatest thing a child can do for his deceased parent.

Divide Your Time Wisely

(To a woman who says she is too busy to do activities)

AS individuals are different, so are their destinies and circumstances. There are children who are sickly and require much care, and there are those who are healthy and easy to raise. Some husbands are understanding, and others are not.

You say you are busy participating in the affairs of your neighborhood association and practicing Japanese dance. Why are you doing all this? I'm sure it's because you want to contribute even a little to society and also to improve yourself. Therefore you have no alternative but to pray to the Gohonzon so that each day you will be able to divide your time most effectively between Gakkai activities and other matters which concern you. This by no means implies that you should always give first priority to Gakkai activities, second to your dance and third to the neighborhood association. Circum-

stances differ from day to day. You must decide each day what to do first and what to do second, third and so on in order to complete all of them effectively.

Once, at a daytime meeting, a housewife sought my advice. Her husband violently opposed her faith. Before leaving for the meeting, she had told him that she was going to visit a friend. There was a chapter leaders' meeting scheduled for that evening, but she had not mentioned it to him out of fear of his reaction. She was a group women's chief. If she failed to appear, her chapter women's chief might be disappointed in her. On the other hand, if she attended the meeting, she would be home much later than she had said. Her husband would find out that she had been to a meeting and fly into a rage. "What should I do?" she asked. "Should I participate in the meeting, or should I go home straight from here so my husband won't say anything?"

This is one of those questions which leaders find themselves at a loss to answer. I replied this way: "What if I told you to go to the leaders' meeting because it is your duty as a group women's chief? Your body would be at the meeting, but your mind would not. All the while you would be thinking, 'My husband is probably home by now. He'll be furious when I come back. What excuse can I give?'

"On the other hand, what if I said, 'Since you didn't mention the scheduled meeting to your husband, you should go straight back. Your family is more important. Don't worry about the meeting?' Physically you would be at home, but mentally you would be worrying about not fulfilling your chapter responsibilities.

"Whichever the case, your body would be in one place while your mind would be in another. Nor can you solve the problem by staying halfway between your home and the meeting site. So, you see, I cannot answer your question one way or the other.

"The important thing is for you to consider where your problem originates. It comes from your lack of courage—from your failure to mention the meeting to your husband. You only worry about immediate results without reflecting on your own weakness. You may say, 'I keep every activity a secret from my husband. If I told him, he'd make my life unbearable.' But that's not the correct attitude to take.

"Suppose you have an important meeting to attend. If you mention it to your husband, he'll be angry. So you slip out stealthily. Later he finds out and becomes terribly angry. Next time you make your exit even more furtively. When you return, he'll be even more furious than before. This is a vicious circle. It only widens the gap between you and your husband.

"The trouble is that you try to avoid looking at your karma and instead just make up some story so that you can sneak out. You practice Buddhism so that you can change your karma. Therefore, you should never try to avoid or gloss over the very real problems you face in life. Instead, bring forth your courage and attack your problems directly, by chanting fervently to the Gohonzon so that you can change that karma. At times you may think that that is the long way around, but it is actually the shortest and fastest way to change your whole life—steadily and surely, one step at a time.

"First, understand that you yourself must enhance your character through faith to the point where your husband will respect your religion and eventually embrace it himself. Then tell him honestly you have a meeting scheduled. If he gets violent about it, you needn't go. But don't use this as an excuse to neglect your practice. Rather, call to your mind the Gohonzon and the teaching that no prayer will go unanswered. Fervently pray to the Gohonzon so that your husband also will take faith. At the same time, be sure to fulfill your responsibilities in the relationship. Determine that you have no alternative but to chant daimoku in order to change your destiny for the better. In this way, you can eventually win your husband's understanding."

The same holds true with you. You see only superficial circumstances and fail to look at your own destiny. Remember that we practice our faith in order to bring about a fundamental change in our destiny. If you are to succeed, you must not try to evade the problem confronting you. Muster your courage, squarely grapple with your problem, and pray and pray to the Gohonzon until you succeed in solving it. It may seem to take a long time, but this way you are slowly but steadily advancing toward your change of destiny.

As long as you say you cannot engage in activities for this or that reason, you will be unable to make progress. You have a past-oriented attitude; that is, you are always stressing the way things have been up till now and not the way they should be. Now you are too busy to do Gakkai activities and handle all the other things you have to do. It is precisely for this reason that you should

devotedly chant daimoku, praying that you will be able to use your time most effectively and perform both Gakkai activities and other necessary affairs perfectly. That is what our faith is for, isn't it?

Sometimes members say, "My company is now in its busiest season. Stacks of bills are falling due. I've got to work till late every night. I'll start activities as soon as I have some spare time." They are like someone with an injured leg who, when urged to consult a doctor, replies, "I'll go see one when I'm able to walk again." Some people laugh when they hear this, but when it comes to their own affairs, they say, "I'll begin doing activities when I get out of my financial straits and have some time to spare." That's putting the cart before the horse. If someone doesn't have enough money and has no free time, it follows that he lacks both good fortune and sufficient vital life force. It is exactly for this reason that individuals in this situation must devote themselves to the practice of faith.

In your own case, always consider how you can carry out both Gakkai activities and other matters, and pray to the Gohonzon for the best solution. Then act wisely as each day and each situation demand.

Work and Activities

WHEN told that they must reconcile work and Gakkai activities, some members think, "That means not to devote ourselves a hundred percent only to one or the

other. We only need to do both to a moderate degree. That is what Buddhism calls the Middle Way." This is a wrong interpretation.

Let me cite a group chief's experience as an example. He used to be a member of the young men's division. Having been appointed a group chief in the men's division, he began to engage in activities even more vigorously than before. He ran a small factory with about a dozen employees. In a few months he realized that his business was not going well.

Many people would have decided to stop activities altogether until the business was rehabilitated. (I recognize that there may be cases where this is the only alternative.) The group chief, however, went a step further. To be more specific, he resolved to exert himself all-out to rebuild his business and at the same time not to neglect activities even a bit. He earnestly chanted daimoku so that he would be able to do both in a most satisfactory manner.

What he did first was to divide his firm into two sections: production and business—functions for which he had previously held himself entirely responsible. He appointed one of the employees as head of production while he himself took charge of business. He also adopted a system of computing pay according to productivity, so that each employee began to perform his job with increased gusto. These new arrangements proved to be a great success. Not only did the firm's business begin flourishing again, but the group chief found even more time than before for activities.

Note that he did not choose between work and activi-

ties. Only when he resolved to carry out both successfully with an eye to the future did he see a new path open before him. To reconcile work and activities is not to perform both halfway, but to perform both to the fullest extent. For this purpose, consider carefully what you should do, and chant earnestly. Then wisdom will inevitably well up within you, showing you a splendid way out of your difficulty.

The Purpose of Marriage

(To a member whose fiancé is not a Nichiren Shoshu believer)

THE most important thing for you now is to be clear in your own mind about why you are getting married. Many people marry in search of happiness and strive, each in his or her own way, to attain it. Then do they all become happy? Everyone knows that the answer is no. Why? To answer this question, we must first of all recognize the fundamental cause which prevents people from becoming happy. Otherwise we will be making the mistake of not seeing the forest for the trees.

A man and woman join hands in marriage not just for the sake of being married but because they want to be happy. From this standpoint, you should consider if you can make a valid decision only on the basis of whether or not the other party is a Nichiren Shoshu believer.

Some members marry non-members for the simple

reason that they cannot find anyone suitable among the believers. Sometimes, they later experience difficulty on this account. This is not to say, however, that you must necessarily choose your spouse from among the members. But some seniors say to their junior members, "Because that person is not a believer, he (or she) is not a suitable marriage partner"—and this without knowing anything about that person! Many youth division members also seem to be caught up in the simplistic idea that they must not marry anyone but a believer.

To say simply, "I won't marry anyone but a believer," is just a reverse way of saying, "I will marry anyone who is a believer." But is just any Nichiren Shoshu member a suitable marriage partner? Let's examine this question. Once a member of the young women's division came to me for advice. A man, who was not a member, had proposed to her. He himself had no intention of taking faith but wanted to marry her anyway. Each time he had asked her she rejected him for the simple reason that he was not a believer. Her suitor, however, would not give up. At her wits' end, she had come to seek my guidance.

"You won't marry him because he is not a member," I said to her. "Then would you take just any man for your husband as long as he chants to the Gohonzon?"

"No, of course not," she replied.

I pointed out to her the pitfalls in her way of thinking. "Suppose a man who is not a member proposes to a woman who believes in Nichiren Shoshu. She persists in rejecting his request because he is not a believer, so strongly that he finally consents to taking faith. Relieved

and overjoyed, she immediately decides to marry him. But wait just a moment! Such a suitor often turns out to be an untrustworthy person. He may have professed faith only as an expedient in order to marry her. He may only want her money, not her herself. Or he may be trying to get a good job through her family connections. There may possibly be some ulterior motive involved when a man decides to become a member under such circumstances.

"In a nutshell, the purpose of getting married is to be happy. It is relatively easy to marry but quite difficult to be married happily. Some people find happiness after marriage, others do not. There are a number of conditions which work to ensure a happy marriage. Faith is a fundamental one, but it doesn't exclude all the others. The ideal course for you to take is first to let this man practice Buddhism, if it seems at all possible. Then wait and see for a year or so. If you judge him to be trustworthy, feel a liking for him, and if your parents and seniors approve, then you may decide for yourself whether you should marry him. If you have taken all these steps, your marriage is far less likely to end in failure."

In this case, after receiving my guidance, the member of the young women's division met her suitor and said to him, "It would be easy to accept your proposal. But if we are not happy after our marriage, that will be against your interests as well as mine. Marriage is meaningless unless the couple can be happy. In order for us to be happily married, I hope you can see your way clear to take faith in Nichiren Shoshu. Then, when a year or more has passed, if I am convinced that you are